

Decisively Avoiding Defeat: Strategy, the Operational Artist, and Limited War

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Decisively Avoiding Defeat: Strategy, the Operational Artist, and Limited War, by MAJ Matthew Bandi, US Army, 60 pages.

This monograph explores how tension between operational artists and policy makers in limited war is resolved. Wars with limited aims frustrate political and military leaders as they try to reconcile different conceptions of political and policy risk and military effort. Doctrine does not ease this frustration. This monograph shows how strategy in limited war emerges from the negotiation between policy makers and operational artists over means. This emergence aligns different views of risk and military effort.

This paper uses three case studies to show emergence of strategy through negotiation: Burma, August 1943 to March 1945, Korea, June 1950 to April 1951, and Vietnam, January 1967 to March 1968. Each case traces development of the policy aim for military action and the operational approach that guided it, then examines the discourse between the operational artist and policy maker to demonstrate its effect on strategy. This study demonstrates two outcomes. The Burma case examines a limited theater in a war for final victory where strategy stays constant. However, the Vietnam and Korea cases, with more limited aims, show dramatic strategic shifts to resolve tension between the operational artist and policy maker.

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Acronyms

CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff
LBJ	President Lyndon Baines Johnson
SEAC	South East Asia Command
NCAC	Northern Combat Area Command
NSC 68	Report to the National Security Council 68
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
KPA	North Korean People's Army
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
UN	United Nations
SVN	South Vietnamese Army
VC	Viet Cong
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
PAVN	People's Army of North Vietnam
CORDS	Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support

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Section I. Introduction

In 2010, the Obama administration and military leaders grappled with strategy for the war in Afghanistan. The debate created tension. Military leaders who failed to grasp the war's political implications irritated political leaders. Political leaders who did not understand the complexities of military force frustrated military leaders. The debate came to a head in November 2009, with policy makers publicly skeptical "of the entire... military chain of command."¹

The tension had theoretical roots. Clausewitz connected war and politics, stating, "... as policy becomes more... vigorous, so will war."² Policy determined the scope and scale of military action. The more related the policy to final victory, the more policy and military aim aligned. World War Two exemplified this idea. The policy and military aims of unconditional surrender were the same. Victory satisfied voters and politicians. Conversely, the less related the aim to final victory the more politics moderated military effort. After World War Two, the redistribution of power led to a series of limited conflicts with limited aims. In those conflicts, US voters compared dissatisfying outcomes to the decisive outcome of World War Two. In recent American experience, unlimited approaches created victory. The US developed a preference for unlimited war, with defined, nested, and popular aims.

However, this preference exacerbated tension between commanders and policy makers over the role of military force. Cost explains the tension. Wars for final victory, like World War Two, cost a lot. However, the risk of destruction of the state justified that cost. Limited wars, like Vietnam or Afghanistan, complicated calculations. Policy makers sought political efficiency, where limited resources accomplished limited policy aims. For military leaders, even limited wars cause casualties. Efficiency, while important, cannot overcome the military risks of war. Wars of

¹ Woodward, Bob. *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 323.

² Carl von Clausewitz, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, *On War: Indexed Edition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 606.

policy – with a political aim that is not existential - create tension between military leaders and policy makers. The purpose of this monograph is to explore how that tension is resolved, reviewing its theoretical basis, defining the lenses that examine each case, and discussing why this interpretation is necessary. Strategy in limited war emerges from the negotiation between policy makers and operational artists over means. This study uses three cases of limited war to show this. Each case is examined through the lenses of policy, negotiation between the operational artist and policy maker, and the strategy that emerges from that discourse. Each case uses primary and secondary sources to trace the development of the aim, conduct of the negotiation, and strategy's emergence.

Three case studies highlight different examples of negotiation in limited war. The case studies were chosen because they are well documented, which allows a clear picture of the development of the aim. Moreover, each case involves strong, well-known personalities whose interaction is well-documented. This facilitates clear examination of the negotiation between policy makers and operational artists, which in turn shows the emergence of a new strategy. Finally, the first case study shows an example of a limited theater in a war for the political aim of final victory, which emphasizes the next two cases, with more limited objectives in wars limited by policy.

Each case study begins with an examination of the policy that guided the use of military force. Policy has many forms. These include economic policy, local commander's policies, and foreign policy. However, this study deals with the use of military force in conflict. In this case, policy is a conscious effort by a political entity to use military power to accomplish some political purpose, like the increase of its own power. Policy is the rational subcomponent of politics which drives military operations.³ In this study, policy accomplishes a purpose through military action.

³ Christopher Bassford, "Policy, Politics, War and Military Strategy," *The Clausewitz Homepage*, 1997, accessed February 8, 2016, <https://www.clausewitz.com/readings/Bassford/StrategyDraft/index.htm>.

In the American case, the policy maker received the authority to make policy from voters in a democratic political system. They authorize development, enactment, and execution of acceptable policy through election. Acceptability depends on public opinion, and can range from existence of the state, to the maintenance of a worldwide political order, to execution of domestic political initiatives. If policies exceed this acceptable range, voters may replace the policy maker. This creates incentive and risk.⁴

Policies that drive armed conflict have a political goal that provides a purpose for military action. Clausewitz called this purpose the political aim, and defined two categories of aim. First, the political aim of the enemy's overthrow was called final victory, which identified this form as absolute war. Second, Clausewitz then outlined an aim of war moderated by a limited political goal short of final victory.⁵ Politics connects the scale of the political aim to the means available to achieve it, which acts to moderate war. This aim, where the state uses a portion of its resources, is the only feasible one. Therefore, Clausewitz used the term real war to distinguish the form of war that most conflicts take in which the political aim limits the effort and, hence, the proportion of the state's resources devoted to accomplishing the aim.⁶ This bound policy and war.

Strategy guides alignment of aim and means, connecting policy and military means. While there is no single way to define strategy, Lykke's Ends, Ways, and Means framework clearly tied resources and aim. Ends defined the political aim of a strategy. Ways described the conceptual approach to achieving the strategy. Means outlined the resources available to pursue strategic concepts. Ends and Ways are concepts, while Means are tangible things. In Lykke's metaphor, ends, ways, and means formed the legs of a stool, upon which sits national security.

⁴ Alan C. Lamborn, "Theory and the Politics in World Politics," *International Studies Quarterly*, 41, no. 2 (1997): 195, accessed April 9, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3013931?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

⁵ Clausewitz, *On War*, 579.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 585-6.

When ends, ways, and means are out of balance, the stool fell.⁷ Strategy aligns the three to ensure a stable strategic base. But what's the mechanism for developing strategy?

US doctrine assigns the role of strategist to different people. Joint Pamphlet 5-0 says policy makers “promulgate strategic guidance,” by providing “defined” ends, ways, and means.⁸ This makes strategy the responsibility of policy makers. In contrast, Army doctrine introduces operational art, where commanders and staffs develop “strategies,” and campaigns by “integrating ends, ways, and means” to connect strategy to tactical action.⁹ This definition lets the military develop strategy. However, most western governments subordinate the military to policy makers, which creates tension around who is responsible. Doctrine fails to resolve this tension by assigning responsibility for developing strategy.

Civil-military relations theorists resolved it by defining the roles of policy maker and military leader, such as the theories that emerged from the Cold War's existential threats. Huntington's assertion that “politics is beyond the scope of military competence,” outlined a hierarchy where policy makers dictate military action.¹⁰ Published in 1957, this work reflected Cold War fears over control of the highly automated response to nuclear attack and the fear of overreliance on the military for this response. Hence, the desire to effectively bind the efforts of the military hierarchy within a political context. Post-Vietnam interpretations evolved

⁷ H. Richard Yarger, “Toward a Theory of Strategy: Art Lykke and the Army War College Strategy Model,” *The US Army War College Guide to National Security Issues, Vol. 1: Theory of War and Strategy*, 5th ed. (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, 2012), 48, accessed February 23, 2016, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1109>.

⁸ Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), III-7.

⁹ Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 4-1.

¹⁰ Samuel Huntington, *The Solider and the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 71.

Huntington's idea. The 1986 Powell-Weinberger doctrine defined aims and means as a precondition for military action, which moderated Huntington's stance, but maintained the hierarchy.¹¹ Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger's statement choreographed strategy development and demanded the use of military force only to achieve victory, as defined within military preferences and aims. The policy maker, exhibiting "decisive leadership," still determined strategy, but the military resisted "casually" developed policies that risked domestic political strife and the reputation of the military. To avoid this, Weinberger defined appropriate aims, thereby limiting policy makers. He opened a door, discussing how ends and means must be "continuously reassessed," to ensure "support and agreement" for policies. This introduces discourse, where policy makers and operational artists have ongoing interaction – or negotiation – that changes priorities and results in new decisions. But Weinberger kept the onus on policy makers to maintain domestic support for war. Cold War civil-military relations theories made policy makers strategists, and allowed military leaders little input.

These theories showed that policy "must be accepted as fact."¹² This idea limited the military leader's role to advice over the military's role in war. If policy makers ignored the advice, the military still had to obey. Discourse was unimportant and even, in Huntington's view, poisonous to civil society. This hierarchy assigns responsibility for ends, ways, and means. The policy maker defines ends and ways - the "dynamic, purposive element to state policy."¹³ The military leader determined the means necessary to achieve dictated ends. Politicians dictated the principles behind military force, while military men focused on the instruments of war. However, if principles and means did not align, the military leader had to adjust.

¹¹ Caspar W. Weinberger, "The Uses of Military Power" (lecture, National Press Club, Washington DC, November 28, 1984), accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/military/force/weinberger.html>.

¹² Huntington, *Soldier and the State*, 77.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 68.

Modern theorists approached this relationship differently. Eliot Cohen removed Weinberger's fixed rules for strategy. Cohen allowed negotiation between civil and military leaders to determine the military's role, but limited military input: "all concerned know who is master."¹⁴ Lawrence Freedman made dialogue between political and military leaders necessary by showing the risk of separation. This moved away from the Cold War hierarchy, but not entirely. Hew Strachan made strategy a means-focused military function which required dialogue with civilian policy functions to work.¹⁵ These ideas maintained the hierarchy, but introduced a two-way relationship. Policy makers focused on the political aim, and military leaders planned use of means. However, the roles were blurred, creating a basis for discourse, or negotiation, between operational artists and policy makers.

Later theories define roles and require negotiation, but do not describe or guide the negotiation in meaningful ways. Huntington outlined acceptable behavior. Weinberger restricted policy makers' behavior, indirectly defining roles. Freedman and Strachan made dialogue essential for strategy. This assigned some strategic responsibility to military leaders, if only just to keep the dialogue going. However, the focus on defining roles crowded out discussion of dialogue. Therefore, the tension over strategy still remains. This study examines the negotiation that aligns ends, ways, and means to define strategy in limited war. Strategy emerges from negotiation between the policy maker and operational artist over means.

This paper uses three case studies to show how strategy emerges through negotiation over means: Burma, August 1943 to March 1945, Korea, 1950, and Vietnam, 1967 to March, 1968. Each case study traces development of the policy aim and the operational approach to establish negotiating positions. Each case study describes the negotiation to show the emergence of a

¹⁴Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), 211.

¹⁵Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 19.

strategy and show that this negotiation drove strategy. Finally, one case shows negotiation for a limited aim theater within in a war with the political goal of final victory to highlight the idea of emergent strategy from limited resources.

Primary sources, particularly meeting minutes and autobiographies, depict discourse between operational artist and policy maker. For the Burma case, the minutes of the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) were of value as a record of policy and strategy development in World War Two. They also recorded the negotiation between the operational artist and policy maker. Andrew Rawson's *Organizing Victory* annotated the minutes, which aided research by providing detail difficult to find in original documents.¹⁶ Mountbatten's memoirs and Slim's *Defeat Into Victory* provide perspectives on behind-the-scenes friction.¹⁷ Additionally, articles by Franklin Roosevelt provides insight on his policy background and the background of US foreign policy and China.¹⁸

For the Korean case, this study used papers from the Truman Library, including correspondence of President Truman and his advisors, records of policy discussions, and policy publications. These sources show the evolution of Truman's Korea policy, and some of the negotiation between Truman and the operational artist. Second, this study used an autobiography of the operational artist, General MacArthur, to provide insight to his negotiating position. The utility of this source is questionable, as it shows MacArthur's agenda in Korea.¹⁹ However, a MacArthur biography by his aide General Courtney Whitney shows the rapid development of

¹⁶ Andrew Rawson, ed., *Organizing Victory: The War Conferences 1941-45* (Stroud, UK: The History Press, 2013), 211.

¹⁷ William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 201-204.

¹⁸ Franklin Roosevelt, "Our Foreign Policy: A Democratic View," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 6, no. 4 (July 1928), accessed August 20, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.org/articles/united-states/1928-07-01/our-foreign-policy-0>.

¹⁹ Douglas A. MacArthur, *Duty, Honor, Country: A Pictorial Autobiography* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 151. This narrative, written after MacArthur's relief, is a strident critique of policy decisions in Korea.

MacArthur's approach and his view of the utility of the Korean War that aligns with similar ideas presented in the autobiography.²⁰

For the Vietnam case, the study used a collection of Lyndon B. Johnson's (LBJ) Vietnam Papers.²¹ This showed LBJ's correspondence and papers from a range of advisors who influenced Vietnam policy. The autobiography of General William Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, provides the operational artist's view of the negotiation, and rationale for decisions.²² Finally, the Pentagon Papers provide the government narrative for the negotiation, and perspective on the political effects of Vietnam policy, particularly after Tet.²³

Moreover, US Army doctrine, including different editions of FM 100-5, *Operations*, and FM 100-15, *Large-Unit Operations* place the actions of the operational artist in context by showing the Army's perspective on civil-military relations, their role, and war's object.²⁴ In this frame, doctrine connects the operational artist to a larger body of military thought that showed how that thought influenced the operational artist's negotiating position.

Each case used a range of secondary sources to broaden the views of the primary sources and establish narratives that led to further research. A number of secondary sources illuminated specific issues, but several had significant utility in this study. The Army Center of Military History's Green Books, particularly *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-2* and *Washington Command Post*, established the development of policy aims, strategies, and

²⁰ Courtney Whitney, *MacArthur: His Rendezvous With History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 329.

²¹ David M. Barrett, ed., *Lyndon B. Johnson's Vietnam Papers: A Documentary Collection* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 27.

²² William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1976), 234.

²³ Office of The Secretary of Defense, "Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force," *Pentagon Papers, Part IV –C-6-C* (1971), 9, accessed August 27, 2015, available from <http://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers/>.

²⁴ War Department. Field Manual 100-5: Field Service Regulations, *Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1944), 24.

coordination of US and UK efforts in Burma.²⁵ *Stillwell's Mission to China* focused on development of Burma in US strategy and the background of South East Asia Command to give a basis for analysis of the negotiation.²⁶ Herring's *From Colony to Superpower: US Foreign Relations Since 1776* traces development of US policy in Asia.²⁷ Finally, Philip Ziegler's biography of the operational artist, *Mountbatten*, expands his memoirs by gathering perspectives and quotes about the operational artist.²⁸

The Korean War study relied on the Army Center of Military History's Korean War series. Schnabel's *Policy and Direction in the First Year* shows the evolution of policy and strategy in 1950, which facilitated additional research.²⁹ Appleman's *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* describes the commitment of means that defined the negotiation between MacArthur and Truman.³⁰ Alan Millett's *The War For Korea: 1950-1951* provides operational and tactical perspective that framed the US Army sources in a helpful way.³¹ Paterson's *Meeting the*

²⁵Maurice Matloff and Edwin Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare: 1941-1942*(Washington DC: Center of Military History, 1999), 14; Ray S. Cline, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division* (Washington DC: Center of Military History, 1990), 100.

²⁶ Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Stillwell's Mission to China* (Washington DC: Center of Military History, 1987), 3.

²⁷ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: US Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 446.

²⁸ Phillip Ziegler, *Mountbatten* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 291.

²⁹ James F. Schnabel, *Policy and Direction: The First Year*, United States Army in the Korean War (Washington DC, Center of Military History, 1992), 21.

³⁰ Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu (June – November 1950)*, US Army in the Korean War (Washington DC: Center of Military History, 1992), 118.

³¹ Allan R. Millett, *The War For Korea, 1950 – 1951: They Came from the North* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2010), 60.

Communist Threat illuminates the development of containment policy and the military responses supporting it that preceded Korea.³²

The US Army's Vietnam series provided a narrative of policy and strategy development, and showed the increase of means in Vietnam. Clarke's *Advice and Support: The Final Years* shows Westmoreland's development and focuses on the pacification and advisory aspects of US involvement to illuminate Westmoreland's operational approach.³³ Cosmas' *MACV: The Joint Command* series traced MACV's expansion, Westmoreland's execution of policy guidance, and results of negotiation.³⁴ Drea's history of the Secretary of Defense, *McNamara, Clifford, and the Costs of Vietnam*, discusses the political and economic impact of Vietnam policy. It also frames primary sources from the perspective of the Secretary of Defense, who had a powerful voice in the Johnson administration.³⁵

The three case studies use evidence to trace development of the policy aim and the operational approach to establish negotiating positions. Each case study then describes the negotiation to show the emergence of strategy. The first case, Burma, explores policy aims and an operational approach to highlight negotiation for resources in a limited theater within in a war with the political goal of final victory.

³² Thomas G. Paterson, *Meeting the Communist Threat: Truman to Reagan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 12.

³³ Jeffrey J. Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, United States Army in Vietnam (Washington DC: Center of Military History, 1988), 20.

³⁴ Graham A. Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation*, The United States Army in Vietnam (Washington DC, Center of Military History: 2006), 17.

³⁵ Edward J. Drea, *McNamara, Clifford, and the Burdens of Vietnam 1965-1969* (Washington DC: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2011), 44, accessed February 8, 2016, http://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/secretaryofdefense/OSDSeries_Vol6.pdf.

Section II. Burma, August 1943 to March 1945

Policy and strategy aligned in World War Two as the Allies fought a war for final victory in a number of theaters across the world. The combined resources and political will of the Allies shaped a strategy to guide execution of that war. The strategy that defined combined operations in Burma between August, 1943, and March, 1945, emerged from discourse between the operational artist, Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, and the policy makers, the Combined Chiefs of Staff, over the means to conduct operations.

The Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) developed the policy aim in Burma. The CCS was chartered in January 1942 to coordinate the views of the United States and the United Kingdom and “settle the broad [program] of... strategic policy,” that emerged with the entrance of the United States into the war in December 1941.³⁶ The principal military leaders of the US and the UK were the initial members of the CCS. Field Marshal Sir John Dill led a British contingent of four officers, while General Marshall, General Arnold, Admiral Stark, and Admiral King provided the American contingent, along with an evolving cast of briefers, analysts, and subject matter experts that attended meetings when necessary. The deliberations of this body, along with their national leaders when matters of broad policy were involved, created the strategic direction for US and UK forces during World War Two. The CCS consulted other nations – like the Nationalist Chinese government and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – but these nations were never formal members. The CCS’s multinational nature meant that national interests shaped the decisions of this body.

The political focus of the war was in Europe, which limited the aim in the Pacific. The negotiations in 1944 were the result of decisions by the CCS as early as February 1941. The ABC Staff conferences, the predecessor to the CCS, established the broad political aim of the war in 1941. The conference, which included Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and the military

³⁶ Cline, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division*, 100.

leaders of the US and UK, defined Germany's defeat as the "key to victory," while the defeat of Italy and Japan "must follow."³⁷ The conceptual framework for the war maximized efforts against Germany, while efforts against Japan used the "minimum of force necessary."³⁸ This decision also made the effort against the Axis a coalition effort, and subjected the decisions of the CCS to the competing national interests of the coalition nations. The 1942 ARCADIA Conference reiterated the earlier Europe First Decision, and fleshed out a concept of offensive operations against North Africa then Europe.³⁹ While this concept fit the broad framework of the ABC conferences, it sacrificed American political sentiment which advocated aggressive action against Japan. However, this political concession was necessary. The US's slow mobilization schedule ensured the primacy of British demands until the US military was able to provide meaningful assistance to the war effort. By placing Europe first, the Allies limited war in the Pacific.

This limited aim in the Pacific shaped operations on Japan's periphery, including operations in Burma. In March 1942, the Japanese pushed the British out of their Burmese colony, consolidating Japanese control of Southeast Asia, with one exception: the Nationalist Chinese fought under Chiang Kai-Shek, whose army controlled the Yunnan Province of Southwest China, along the Burmese border. This drove a wedge in the Japanese occupation of East Asia, and created an opportunity for the Allies, who had a diplomatic relationship with Chiang. By fighting the Japanese, the Nationalist Chinese drew Japanese resources away from other areas in the Pacific. Burma's position, located between British-controlled ports and railways in India, and the Nationalist Chinese base in Yunnan Province, made it the only possible land line of communication to get materiel to the Nationalist Chinese and keep them in the war. If the Japanese-controlled Burma Road could be reopened to allow ground movement of the aircraft

³⁷ Joint History Office, *World War II Inter-allied Conferences: Arcadia Conference* (Washington DC: Joint History Office, 2003), 28.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

³⁹ Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare*, 14.

and materiel necessary to support ground-based aircraft in China, the Allies could support the Chinese and achieve their strategic aim with an air campaign against the Japanese. This made Burma an “essential supporting position.”⁴⁰ The Nationalist Chinese became party to the negotiations of the CCS, which gave both Burma and China strategic significance. However, the supporting role in the larger war against Japan, and the Europe First policy ensured limited means available in theater.

Additionally, the US’s and UK’s divergent national interests in East Asia complicated negotiations. First, the US emphasized the strategic and political importance of relations with China. The US had an important diplomatic and commercial relationship with China, focused on maintaining access to China’s large market for US businesses. The basis for US China policy was the Open Door Policy, which evolved from US involvement in the Pacific in the late 19th Century. The policy ensured continued access to Chinese markets even as European colonial powers exploited political instability following the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 by dividing China among themselves.⁴¹ China’s importance to the US continued throughout the early 20th Century. Franklin Roosevelt adopted the policy of his Secretary of War, known as the Stimson Doctrine, which supported “Asiatic nationalism.”⁴² This policy, couched as support for national sovereignty, opposed Japanese expansion. In doing so, however, it represented a continuity of the Open Door’s commercial focus. Opposing Japanese expansion allowed US commercial access to China.⁴³ China’s large market for US goods became the centerpiece of US Asian policy, and gave China significant influence with US strategy in the Pacific.

⁴⁰ Joint History Office, *Arcadia Conference*, 113.

⁴¹ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 446.

⁴² Romanus and Sunderland, *Stillwell’s Mission to China*, 3.

⁴³ Roosevelt, “Our Foreign Policy,” accessed August 20, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.org/articles/united-states/1928-07-01/our-foreign-policy-0>.

The United Kingdom had a more complicated policy, and a different focus than the US. The British colony in India, along with other colonies in Southeast Asia like Burma and Singapore, was an integral part of British economic power. In fact, India financed as much as two thirds of British government spending in the 19th century, and supported a large colonial empire that defined British foreign policy.⁴⁴ In contrast, the UK had a sordid history in China. The United Kingdom's involvement in China supported the lucrative but exploitative opium trade. Friction with Chinese rulers in the mid-19th Century led to a series of wars that forced Chinese capitulation. However, British domestic sentiment viewed this geopolitical gain as immoral, which colored the UK's China policy – a “permanent disgrace” that required a light tread.⁴⁵ On the other hand, India was the crown jewel of the British Empire and a symbol of British exceptionalism. To the British, China was a peripheral issue, while India was the focus.

Additionally, the history of British administration in India gave British policy makers and military advisers an attachment to Burma. The British annexed Burma in 1885 following a series of wars that started with British efforts to prevent Burmese raids in to India in the 1820s, but gradually turned to seizure, annexation, and colonial administration of the entire country.⁴⁶ British Burma became part of British India, and exploited the agricultural potential of Burma by producing rice for export. Administered from the colonial capital Rangoon, Burma policy focused on the rice-growing areas in the south and the Irrawaddy River used to transport the rice to the

⁴⁴ M.W. Kirby, *The Decline of British Economic Power Since 1870* (London: Routledge, 2006), 20.

⁴⁵ Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War, 1840-1842: Barbarians in the Celestial Empire In The Early Part of the Nineteenth Century and The War By Which They Forced Her Gates Ajar* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 203.

⁴⁶ Michael Adas, *Burma Delta: Economic Development and Social Change on an Asian Rice Frontier, 1852-1941* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 4.

world, while the American focus on China looked at Northern Burma.⁴⁷ British interests in Burma related to territory and the economic benefits that could be extracted from it. This shaped the British strategic view, which emphasized restoration of British colonies, while the US view emphasized China's importance to the war in the Pacific. These demands created tension that needed to be resolved.



Figure 1. *Map of Burma*

Source: Romanus and Sunderland, *Stillwell's Mission to China* (Washington DC: Center of Military History, 1987), inside back cover.

⁴⁷ J.S. Furnivall, "Burma, Past and Present," *Far Eastern Survey*, vol. 22, No. 3 (February 25, 1953): 21-26, accessed February 8, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3024126?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

The CCS held a series of conferences that provided a venue for policy decisions that could resolve the tension created by national demands. Each conference was known by a code name that placed it in sequence. The May 1943 TRIDENT conference – the third in the series – resolved strategic differences between the United States and the United Kingdom by making explicit the limited nature of operations in the Pacific. The UK’s position advocated a pivot to the Pacific only after victory in Europe, while action in the Pacific was politically necessary in the US following Pearl Harbor. TRIDENT’s compromise split the difference with a policy of maintaining “unremitting pressure” on Japan until victory in Europe, when the full resources of the Allies could focus on the unconditional surrender of Japan.⁴⁸ This policy allowed a broad range of strategic options to maintain that pressure, but by not referencing defeat or destruction, limited the effort applied in the Pacific. In short, until Europe was won, operations in the Pacific were limited.

With the broad, limited strategy in the Pacific theater settled, the TRIDENT conference outlined Burma’s role in more detail. Burma’s geography and its proximity to Nationalist Chinese forces created opportunities for the Allies to maintain unremitting pressure against the Japanese. First, it gave the Allies a platform to support land-based aircraft attacks against Japanese lines of communication in the Pacific. The Japanese required significant air and sea power to control geographically dispersed possessions.⁴⁹ Allied air power could disrupt or interdict enemy air and sea power and the lines of communication they secured, and support more decisive attacks against the Japanese in the Central and Southwest Pacific. The Marshall-Stimson thesis expressed the US view: unremitting pressure meant “the build-up of air operations in China with a view to

⁴⁸ Joint History Office, *World War II Inter-allied Conferences: Trident Conference* (Washington DC: Joint History Office, 2003), 26.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 254.

carrying out destructive attacks against Japanese shipping and sources of supply.”⁵⁰ This idea provided a definable political aim by focusing on China.

At the end of the TRIDENT conference, a restatement of the Burma strategy adopted the US Marshall-Stimson thesis, but also kept the door open for the British aim. The statement defined the “recapture” of Burma as “a prerequisite to the attainment of adequate bases in China.”⁵¹ This statement could be interpreted two ways. First, placing emphasis on the word recapture suggested seizure of Burma as a strategic end, which was in line with the British desire to save their colony. However, putting emphasis on the word “prerequisite,” changed the focus to one more in line with the American view, and made recapture of Burma a way to achieve the strategic end of airbases in China. Prerequisites cannot be ends, as they are by definition an intermediate step. However, the recapture of Burma would satisfy both American and British political aims if the resources necessary to defeat Japanese forces in Burma were made available. This strategic ambiguity kept the ambitious British idea alive.

The operational artist interpreted the strategic ambiguity from a unique perspective. Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Royal Navy, was appointed the Commander of the new South East Asia Command in August 1943, three months after the TRIDENT conference.⁵² He inherited the muddled Burma strategy outlined at TRIDENT, and aimed to make it work. Mountbatten was a politically connected member of the UK’s royal family who made a name for himself early in the war as the “massively over promoted” commander of Britain’s amphibious Combined Operations Command.⁵³ This experience convinced him of the utility of amphibious operations in preventing the necessity for long ground campaigns, which shaped his views on the conduct of

⁵⁰ Romanus and Sunderland, *Stillwell’s Mission to China*, 250.

⁵¹ Joint History Office, *Trident Conference*, 35.

⁵² Ziegler, *Mountbatten*, 291.

⁵³ Paul Kennedy, *Engineers of Victory: The Problem Solvers That Turned The Tide in the Second World War* (New York: Random House, 2013), 229.

the campaign. This idea could be useful in Burma, where he felt the jungle would turn any extended ground operation in to an unnecessary war of attrition.⁵⁴ This view shaped his negotiating position with the CCS and heads of state.

Mountbatten's position was apparent in his first proposal. Mountbatten's response to the Trident strategy for Burma was a plan called Buccaneer, which he presented to the CCS in November 1943. Buccaneer called for a large amphibious operation to seize the Andaman Islands, combined with a series of offensive operations in northern Burma to open the Burma Road.⁵⁵ This plan was designed to use the advantages of amphibious operations and also to satisfy Chiang, who was demanding an amphibious operation as a sign of Allied commitment to Nationalist China as a condition for Chinese actions against the Japanese.⁵⁶ This ambitious plan energized British forces in India, a theater that had not known Allied victory.

However, the means required to execute this plan caused resistance among policy makers. First, it required resources beyond what were already in theater. Mountbatten asked for 50,000 additional Allied troops and additional aircraft to fly supplies to China. This request created ambivalence on the UK staff, as operations elsewhere required significantly fewer troops. Churchill called Mountbatten's request "the grossest libel ever uttered" against British troops.⁵⁷ It also exposed the strategic tension caused by competing national interests. The Americans were initially supportive. They felt the resources necessary for the amphibious operation were important to keep Chiang in the war and satisfy their policy aims. However, the reallocation of resources necessary to execute this plan left a "narrow" margin of safety for operations in Europe,

⁵⁴ Ziegler, *Mountbatten*, 250.

⁵⁵ Slim, *Defeat Into Victory*, 204.

⁵⁶ Joint History Office, *Trident Conference*, 314.

⁵⁷ Ziegler, *Mountbatten*, 263.

including the impending invasion of France.⁵⁸ While the UK's colonial legacy was important, operations in Europe were strategically necessary. Mountbatten's proposal was cancelled in early December 1943.⁵⁹ Mountbatten was dejected, saying "it looks to me at the moment as if SEAC... may remain a secondary [theater]."⁶⁰

The policy response to Mountbatten's proposal in early 1944 showed signs of the emerging strategy that further limited the means required in Burma. Early 1944 was a crucial time for the Allies, where the means to conduct war were at a premium. Operations in Europe and the Pacific were increasing in tempo. Preparations for Overlord and the Saipan campaign tied up the majority of Allied amphibious capabilities, while ongoing operations in Italy and Sicily, the Combined Bomber Offensive in Europe, and operations in the Gilberts and Marshalls drew heavily on Allied manpower and aircraft.⁶¹ The conditions that drove the Trident meetings no longer existed. In Burma, an offensive by British General Wingate's Long Range Penetration Group and American General Stillwell's Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC) proved successful by tying down Japanese manpower with limited resources.⁶² Controversially, Stillwell's forces seized the strategic town of Myitkyina without Mountbatten's knowledge.⁶³ This destroyed the American attacking force, but enabled expansion of the air route to China. While operations in Burma were not decisive, they were acceptable to policy makers and in line with the American aim. With huge demand for resources in other theaters, limited operations satisfied the political aim in Burma.

⁵⁸ Rawson, ed., *Organizing Victory*, 211.

⁵⁹ Ziegler, *Mountbatten*, 263.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 264.

⁶¹ Rawson, ed., *Organizing Victory*, 131.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 82.

⁶³ Ziegler, *Mountbatten*, 274.

Policy makers were further encouraged as events in Burma continued to evolve. The Japanese attacked the British garrisons at Imphal and Kohima from bases in Burma in February 1944. Mountbatten framed the defense by Slim's 14th Army as an important fight, and requested additional means, including two US divisions and the delayed transfer of 79 US aircraft to the African theater to keep them available in Burma.⁶⁴ However, British forces on the ground outnumbered their Japanese attackers. Additionally, while the British were fighting a difficult battle, it was no threat to the air route to China. Progress in Burma was happening very much in line with the emerging strategy, and was happening without additional means. Finally, in July 1944, Slim's 14th Army defeated the Japanese at Imphal, forcing the "shattered" Japanese 15th Army to retreat.⁶⁵ The limited cost of success in Burma validated the Combined Chief's decisions to limit the means available to Mountbatten.

New policies in late 1944 made the new strategy explicit. At the OCTAGON conference in September 1944, they charged Mountbatten with the "destruction or expulsion" of Japanese forces in Burma. This differed from the policy of unremitting pressure, and suggested an increase in political will and the possibility of increased effort and means. However, operations were not to "prejudice... the opening of overland communications."⁶⁶ In other words, Mountbatten could use an aggressive, offensive approach, as long as it did not affect the Burma Road. The strategic focus was now clear – ground lines of communication to China.

Seeking to take advantage of the tactical situation and "facilitate an ending" to the war in Burma more decisive than the opening of a road, Mountbatten proposed a much reduced amphibious and airborne proposal to seize the Burmese capital Rangoon in March 1945.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ibid., 271.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 276.

⁶⁶ Joint History Office, *World War II Inter-allied Conferences: Octagon Conference* (Washington DC: Joint History Office, 2003), 210.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 250.

However, less than two weeks later, Churchill cancelled it. Even his reduced plans required reinforcements from Italy.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, the strategic picture continued to improve. In the north, American and Chinese units linked up at Lashio, Burma in March 1945 and opened the Burma Road. This established a land line of communication and made further offensive operations redundant. The Americans, with Chiang now satisfied, saw no need to recapture additional territory for the sake of prestige.⁶⁹ But Mountbatten persisted. In Central Burma, the UK 14th Army took control of the Irrawaddy River valley, setting the stage for seizure of Rangoon from the North. Finally, Burma – along with British colonial prestige – was recovered following an amphibious and airborne operation to seize Burma and facilitate link-up of Slim’s northern axis with the southern one.⁷⁰ The strategy outlined at Trident was met. The Allies effectively cut off negotiations with Mountbatten by limiting him to “forces present at your disposal.”

The strategy that emerged from this discourse did not change in any meaningful way. Mountbatten’s response to his strategic guidance - large scale amphibious operations - tried to take advantage of strategic ambiguity and competing national interests. In the meantime, operations like Stillwell and Wingate’s combined offensive placed pressure on the Japanese. While not air attacks from China, they had an acceptable strategic effect. Again, Mountbatten sought to gild the strategic lily with amphibious proposals. As the war evolved, strategy in Burma focused more narrowly on the Burma Road, and the limited means necessary to open it, instead of the more resource-intensive aim of recapturing Burma. Policy makers accepted a broad range of ways to achieve the limited ends of the Burma Theater; Long Range Penetration Groups and Marauders were just as acceptable as air attacks from China on Japanese shipping. What policy makers could not accept was an increase in means, as it meant sacrifices in more decisive

⁶⁸ Ziegler, *Mountbatten*, 282.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 295.

theaters. In the CCS' view, Mountbatten's negotiation for increased means at every step appeared out of touch with the larger strategic picture.

World War Two was an existential war for the Allies, which ensured maximum effort. But even in an existential war fought across the entire globe, certain parts required more strategic focus than others. In a limited theater, even during an existential war, negotiations over means are still required between policy makers and the operational artist. Moreover, even with a defined global strategy, the strategy that guides operations in the limited theater emerges from that negotiation. The strategy that emerged, even in an existential war, was subject to the cold calculus of means to support a limited political aim.

Section III. Korea, June 1950 to April 1951

On June 25, 1950, the Korean People's Army invaded South Korea with a well-trained, modern army, surprising the United States and the western world. Responding with force, the United Nations (UN), led by US soldiers pulled from occupation duty in Japan, and commanded by General Douglas MacArthur, pursued a limited policy aim shaped by the budding Cold War. The strategy that defined operations in Korea in 1950 emerged from discourse between the operational artist, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, and the policy maker, President Harry S. Truman.

The principle of containment limited the policy aim in Korea. The end of World War Two redistributed power as a dominant US and Soviet Union established a bipolar world order to replace the old multi-polar system.⁷¹ Communism's revolutionary doctrine exacerbated concerns of expansion and political oppression in Europe, particularly among Truman's advisors who ideologically opposed Communism. George Kennan's Long Telegram influenced Truman's position, opposing Communism's "indefinite expansion," and framing negotiation with the Soviets as appeasement.⁷² Containment maintained the status quo between Communist and Democratic powers following the post-war scramble for territory and influence to avoid upsetting a delicate balance of power. Truman adopted this stance in his containment policy, saying failure to act against Communism "may endanger the peace of the world."⁷³ Truman's containment policy framed post-war geopolitics as an ideological struggle that required US intervention to

⁷¹ George C. Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, And the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 170. Ikenberry attributes the establishment of a new geopolitical order to the creation of institutions like NATO and the World Bank to correct post-World War Two power asymmetries. Competition between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to lead those institutions established a balance of power that defined geopolitics during the Cold War.

⁷² Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 605.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 615.

oppose Communism. Later called the Truman Doctrine, this policy created a pattern of military intervention to prevent Soviet expansion.

The loss of the nuclear monopoly and establishment of Communist China in 1949 caused a power shift which forced Truman to reexamine containment. Containment led to an active foreign policy in Europe. Military interventions in Greece in 1946, Italy and Germany in 1948, and a large-scale intelligence operation called Operation Rollback used military force to counter Soviet influence.⁷⁴ The nuclear monopoly and Nationalist China caused Soviet vulnerability, which created a sense of stability for US policy makers. As long as Soviet aggression was trumped with nuclear weapons, and as long as Soviet aggression in Europe made the Soviet Union vulnerable to pro-US action from China, the United States could intervene in the Soviet Union's European backyard. General Douglas MacArthur summarized the principle behind intervention: "when you use force, you can limit the force."⁷⁵ However, the 1949 explosion of a Soviet nuclear bomb changed this calculus. The Soviets now could meet US aggression on more equal terms. Additionally, Mao's takeover of China in 1949 extended Soviet influence in Asia. This covered the Soviet flank and mitigated their vulnerability in the east.⁷⁶ Containment's cornerstone was military intervention, but loss of the nuclear monopoly and Communist China subjected intervention to escalation. The balance of power that the Truman Doctrine sought to exploit became vastly more complex.

The Truman Administration responded to the events of 1949 with the Report to the National Security Council 68 (NSC 68). NSC 68 evolved the Truman Doctrine by recognizing the risk caused by the loss of nuclear monopoly and newly Communist China. NSC 68 used military

⁷⁴ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 622.

⁷⁵ Paterson, *Meeting the Communist Threat*, 12.

⁷⁶ Department of the Army, *Korea – 1950* (Washington DC: Center of Military History, 1997), 3.

buildups, economic mobilization, and increased global commitments to counter Soviet influence and “foster the seeds of destruction within the Soviet system,” by co-opting the Soviet population.⁷⁷ Understanding that military action would unite the Soviet people behind their oppressive government, NSC 68 limited the military’s role to deterrence “while we seek other means.”⁷⁸ Other means meant diplomacy, the decisive instrument under NSC 68. Diplomacy mitigated the now-acute risk of nuclear escalation while supporting free-world institutions. NSC 68 gave a new strategic focus to containment by subordinating the military to diplomacy, which mitigated the risk of “excessive or misdirected” actions which made enemies of populations.⁷⁹ NSC 68 used diplomacy as the decisive instrument to manage geopolitical risk. This idea shaped the political aim in Korea.

The role of Korea in the world order also limited Truman’s policy aim. NSC 68 focused on Western Europe, calling the risk of Soviet expansion there “catastrophic.”⁸⁰ This reflected US policy focus on Europe, where “common heritage” created a “mutual aid” principle that led to the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in January 1950.⁸¹ In contrast, Korea’s value was limited to shaping relations with Japan and China, which limited the means devoted to it.⁸² NSC 68 placed Korea in a category of countries called “other.”⁸³ Additionally,

⁷⁷ The Executive Secretary on United States Objectives and Programs for National Security, “A Report to the National Security Council - NSC 68,” April 12, 1950, President’s Secretary’s File, Truman Papers, 21, accessed December 16, 2015, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/10-1.pdf.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 12.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 40.

⁸¹ Lord Hastings Lionel Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years, 1949 – 1954* (Paris: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1955), accessed February 20, 2016, <http://www.nato.int/archives/1st5years/chapters/9.htm>.

⁸² Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 4-6.

⁸³ NSC 68, 33.

Secretary of State Dean Acheson specifically excluded Korea from the US strategy in the Far East in a January 1950 speech.⁸⁴ The Bonesteel line divided Korea following a hasty US-Soviet agreement in 1945.⁸⁵ A divided Korea satisfied the US, as long as it stayed that way. Further diplomatic and military efforts in the new South Korea focused on a sustainable, non-communist government to allow a US withdrawal. The 1948 South Korean elections created a government, and a small military advisory group helped establish a military that could maintain internal security, but could not attack the Communist North and upset the balance.⁸⁶ The US limited policy toward Korea to support European commitments. This complex environment shaped Truman's initial Korean strategy.

US domestic politics also necessitated economy in Korea, as President Truman, conscious of the costs of defense, strove for efficiency. His Secretary of Defense, Louis A. Johnson, took an aggressive approach to this efficiency drive, promising to cut "spendthrift defense."⁸⁷ These cuts assumed that future military actions would be limited and conducted by the Air Force's strategic nuclear forces.⁸⁸ Therefore, the Army and Marine Corps shrank significantly, and readiness suffered. Of the Army's ten divisions, only the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg stayed combat-ready. Four divisions in the Far East represented the US's largest overseas military commitment, but efficiency efforts degraded the readiness of this large force. To meet shrinking budgets, Far East divisions shrank. Infantry regiments cut a battalion, companies a

⁸⁴ Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 21.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 28.

⁸⁷ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Louis A. Johnson*, Historical Office, <http://history.defense.gov/Multimedia/Biographies/ArticleView/tabid/8347/Article/571265/louis-a-johnson.aspx>, accessed February 18, 2016.

⁸⁸ Millett, *The War For Korea*, 60.

platoon, and heavy armor moved elsewhere.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, in 1950, NATO adopted a “forward strategy” that increased military commitments in Europe.⁹⁰ This strategy committed the US to increase their presence in Europe beyond their existing commitment of one division and three armored cavalry regiments, which stressed a shrunken US Army and further marginalized US efforts in the Far East.

On June 25, 1950, a North Korean invasion realized US fears of aggressive Communist expansion, providing a harsh test for the containment policy. A perception that the invasion was part of a larger plan for Communist world domination made military involvement necessary. “Affirmative [military] action,” could stabilize Korea, and “forestall deterioration of the entire Far East situation.”⁹¹ However, there were limits to offensive action, and while the possibility of Soviet involvement created uncertainty, Truman proceeded carefully.

The discourse between the operational artist and the policy makers focused on the means to achieve a limited political aim. Each party’s view of the threat shaped their negotiating position. Truman’s response to the invasion was in the interventionist spirit of containment, but fear of Soviet or Chinese involvement and limited means meant careful intervention. Truman outlined his aim in a June 25, 1950 directive to General MacArthur that required him to “stabilize the combat situation... and... restore the 38th parallel.”⁹² This aim maintained geopolitical order with force, but had no decisive military objective. Truman’s advisors believed the Russians were behind the invasion. Therefore, any response to North Korean aggression was a response to the

⁸⁹ Ibid., 78.

⁹⁰ Ismay, *NATO*, <http://www.nato.int/archives/1st5years/chapters/4.htm>.

⁹¹ Points Requiring Presidential Decision, ca. June 1950, Harry S. Truman Administration File, Elsey Papers, accessed February 18, 2016, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?pagenumber=5&documentdate=1950-06-00&documentid=ki-1-13.

⁹² Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 67.

Russians, and the first step to world war.⁹³ MacArthur focused in a different direction. To him, the war in Korea tested US prestige. If the US lost Korea, they lost Asia to the Communists. However, if the US won in Korea, Europe “will probably be saved from war.”⁹⁴ To MacArthur, the US interest was final victory – a broader political and strategic end than restoration of the border. However, he could not achieve it with the “handful of troops available.”⁹⁵ General MacArthur’s response to the invasion set conditions for his negotiation with Truman in light of a limited aim.

General MacArthur’s response to Truman’s political aim represented his military background as the Commander of the United States Far East Command, and the senior military officer in Asia. MacArthur developed a military approach to achieve the strategic objective of the Korean War, and negotiated directly with policy makers over the means necessary to achieve it. MacArthur was an experienced officer whose career included a stint as the *de facto* dictator of Japan. He sought to defeat the North Korean People’s Army (KPA) with what he called “strategic offensive.”⁹⁶ Strategic offensive attacked the KPA rear, where US forces would expose “the vulnerability” of the enemy’s supply position, disorganize them, and defeat them in detail.⁹⁷ Defeat set conditions for “unit[ing] Korea,” revealing MacArthur’s opinion of the utility of military action,⁹⁸ around which concept MacArthur’s military background revolved. In World War One, MacArthur gained experience in the Meuse-Argonne, where the American Expeditionary Force attacked the German rear to restrict their ability to reinforce. MacArthur’s

⁹³ Ibid., 67.

⁹⁴ MacArthur, *Duty, Honor, Country*, 151.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 139.

⁹⁶ Whitney, *MacArthur*, 329.

⁹⁷ MacArthur, *Duty, Honor, Country*, 151.

⁹⁸ Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 107.

World War Two operational approach reflected this experience, where, for example, Operation Cartwheel was an “outflanking move,” against the Japanese base at Rabaul designed to “[prevent] reinforcements and supplies reaching Japanese garrisons...”⁹⁹ MacArthur’s approach reflected experience so vast that it initially “intimidated” Truman, denying a consistent operational approach between policy maker and operational artist.¹⁰⁰

MacArthur’s approach also reflected contemporary military thought. Military doctrine portrayed the enemy army as the object of war. FM 100-5 (1944) gives the purpose of offensive action as “the destruction of the hostile armed forces.”¹⁰¹ Attacking a “vital area in the hostile rear” accomplished that destruction.¹⁰² Other revisions sounded a similar note. The 1949 edition defined military action as both the “destruction of the enemy’s armed forces,” and “his will to fight.”¹⁰³ US Army doctrine supported MacArthur’s view of the Korean War, and his desired operational approach, which demanded he seek the means to accomplish that doctrine.

MacArthur requested means gradually as the situation in Korea developed. On June 29, General MacArthur visited Korea, and produced a report for Truman that reflected pessimism about the ability of the South Koreans to stop the invasion.¹⁰⁴ MacArthur asked President Truman to use US forces against the KPA to avoid losing Korea, requesting two divisions for “an arrogant display of strength,” and to set conditions for a counteroffensive.¹⁰⁵ This request was granted, but

⁹⁹ Joint History Office, *World War II Inter-allied Conferences: Sextant Conference* (Washington DC: Joint History Office, 2003), 276.

¹⁰⁰ Millett, *The War for Korea*, 213.

¹⁰¹ War Department, Field Manual 100-5 (1944), 24.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰³ War Department. Field Manual 100-5: Field Service Regulations, *Operations*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1949), 30.

¹⁰⁴ Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 78.

¹⁰⁵ Millett, *The War for Korea*, 132.

action by the 24th Infantry Division failed to stop the North Koreans. MacArthur understood the implications, and by July 7th, submitted a revised request for four and a half divisions.¹⁰⁶

MacArthur's operational approach emerged as an intent to hold the peninsula with 3 divisions, while a fourth conducted a decisive counteroffensive.¹⁰⁷ However, conditions in Korea deteriorated, and MacArthur revised that request again. By August 1950, MacArthur asked for six to six and a half divisions.¹⁰⁸ This third request was important, because Far East Command had only four divisions. MacArthur's request acknowledged the need for more means by potentially drawing on the US's strategic reserve. A month into the war, MacArthur exceeded the limited political aim.

Truman granted MacArthur's requests, which caused the first significant strategic change. North Korean success put Truman in a bad strategic position. A limited approach that economized US force was not working. But expansion risked Soviet or Chinese intervention. However, domestic and world political sentiment coalesced around an aggressive approach due to North Korean success. Truman was buoyed by two actors that promoted confidence in US efforts in Korea. First, a powerful State Department faction, including the Secretary of State, advocated reunification of Korea. Second, a July 27 United Nations Security Council resolution approved military action against North Korea despite a Soviet protest by abstention, suggesting a geopolitical appetite for risk.¹⁰⁹ Truman expanded the war.¹¹⁰ He displayed confidence in MacArthur's approach, and approved an amphibious operation at Inchon on September 8. Truman's approval of MacArthur's troop requests and invasion of North Korea showed an

¹⁰⁶ Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 118.

¹⁰⁷ Millett, *The War for Korea*, 168.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁰⁹ Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 74.

¹¹⁰ Millett, *The War for Korea*, 148.

ongoing evaluation of strategic ends as the situation evolved. Growing confidence and a stabilized political situation allowed Truman to expand his limited policy aim.

Success at Incheon bolstered Truman's optimism. MacArthur's September 29 seizure of Seoul gave credence to the State Department's reunification clique.¹¹¹ The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) were "completely confident that [Korea]... will be carried to a successful conclusion."¹¹² Truman called it a "brilliant maneuver" that "few operations in military history [could] match."¹¹³ The strategic effects validated Truman's hyperbole. The KPA withdrew from Pusan on 23 September.¹¹⁴ By October 1, the KPA collapsed, and MacArthur stood on the "eve of pursuit and exploitation..."¹¹⁵ The JCS, more laconic than the President, sent a September 27 directive that required their approval for operations in North Korea. Truman countermanded the JCS, telling MacArthur to "feel free" to proceed to North Korea.¹¹⁶ The post-Incheon optimism also affected international politics. On October 1, the UN passed a resolution that supported UN-controlled Korean unification.¹¹⁷ This strategy sought final victory and reunification, which now appeared possible without additional means. MacArthur broadly interpreted Truman's guidance, and pushed US troops to the Chinese border. Triumphant, he met Truman at Wake Island to plan the "approaching victory."¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 537.

¹¹² Ibid., 538.

¹¹³ Ibid., 538.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 572.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 572.

¹¹⁶ Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 608.

¹¹⁷ Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 194.

¹¹⁸ Millett, *The War for Korea*, 282.

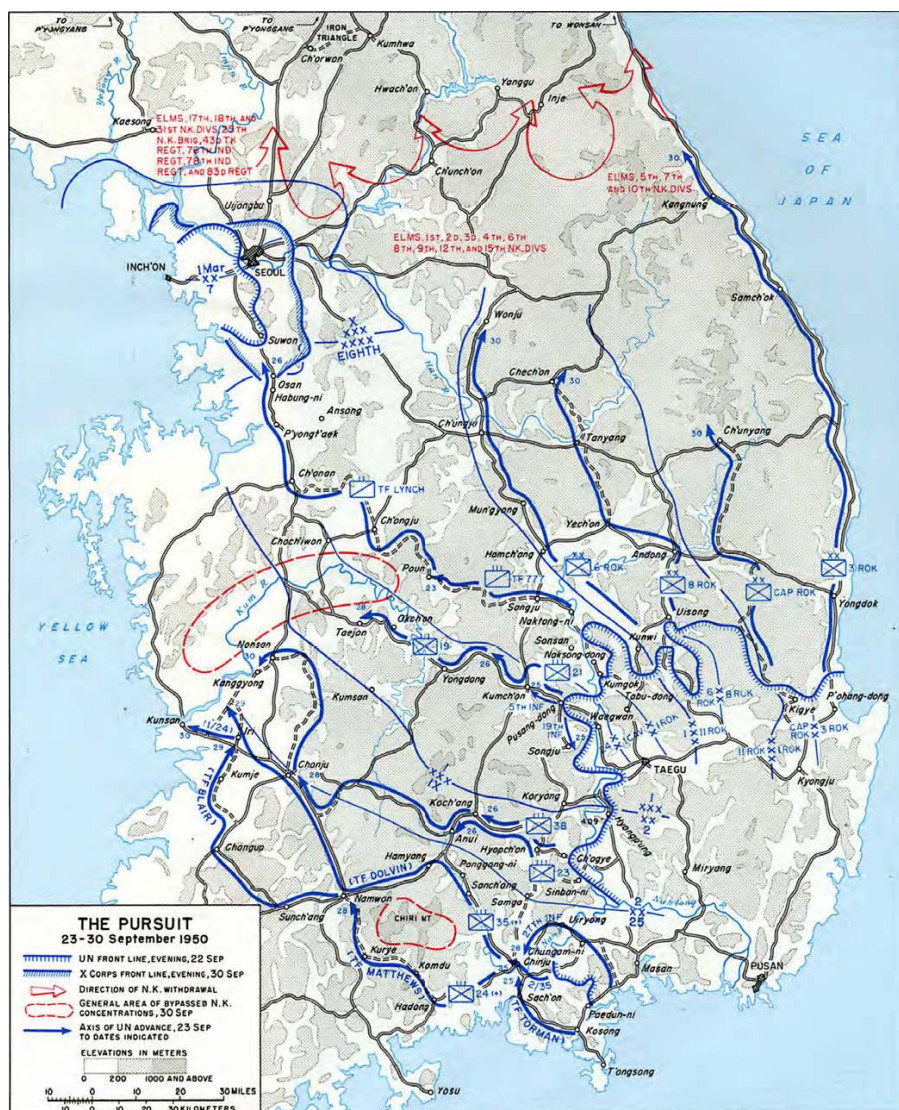


Figure 2. The Pursuit, 23-30 September 1950

Source: Appleman, *South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*, 574.

However, the Chinese intervention in October and November caused Truman and MacArthur's positions to diverge and created a second strategic shift. MacArthur's response to Chinese intervention continued his strategic offensive approach. He maintained a "hard and fast" ground attack supported by air interdiction of Chinese troop movements into Korea.¹¹⁹ However,

¹¹⁹ Appleman, *South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*, 793.

the September 27 JCS directive prevented the air action in Manchuria necessary to execute this approach.¹²⁰ Chinese aircraft could retreat to China without fear of US pursuit. To solve this, MacArthur proposed a “maximum effort” air campaign to interdict Chinese movement and strike Manchurian air bases in support of a “Home by Christmas” offensive.¹²¹ MacArthur wanted to expand the war.

However, Allied views of Chinese actions in Korea cast doubt on the feasibility of MacArthur’s approach and influenced the policy response. The September JCS directive that restricted non-Korean troops near China also proscribed air action in Manchuria.¹²² MacArthur, with Truman’s acknowledgement, ignored that directive prior to Chinese intervention, and aimed to do so now. His reports to Washington understated the Chinese threat and cautioned against “hasty conclusions” on Chinese actions.¹²³ However, in late October and early November, Allied governments passed information on Chinese combat power and motivations that contradicted MacArthur’s breezy, confident reports. The JCS, skeptical of MacArthur’s view, reasserted themselves in a November 6 directive that avoided expansion by restricting MacArthur’s bombing campaign and offensive to Korea.¹²⁴ The initial policy response showed the re-emergence of a limited aim.

¹²⁰ Millett, *The War for Korea*, 307.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 310.

¹²² George C. Marshall, “Directive to the Commander of United Nations Forces in Korea,” September 27, 1950, Truman Library, Independence, MO, accessed February 18, 2016, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-18-3.pdf#zoom=100.

¹²³ Douglas MacArthur, “Message from CINCFE for JCS,” November 4, 1950, Truman Library, Independence, MO, accessed February 18, 2016, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-22-13.pdf#zoom=100.

¹²⁴ Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Message from JCS to CINCFE,” November 6, 1950, Truman Library, Independence, MO, accessed February 18, 2016, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-22-14.pdf#zoom=100.

A second Chinese offensive in late November crystalized the limited aim. The November 24 Chinese offensive realized fears of expansion. The Chinese responded to MacArthur's offensive with significant strength and regained the initiative. Although the US still held territory in North Korea as far north as the Yalu, the Chinese suddenly seemed willing to "throw the book," at UN forces. Uncontrolled expansion loomed.¹²⁵ In response, the JCS halted the air campaign in early December, which followed MacArthur's decision to halt and cover an exposed flank.¹²⁶

Simultaneously, Truman revised NSC 68 in December 1950. This created a policy that limited the Korean aim, re-emphasized Europe, and stabilized the means available in Korea.¹²⁷ Significantly, it reassured European allies.¹²⁸ Prime Minister Clement Atlee stated "the pressure of communist expansion existed in Europe long before the aggression against Korea."¹²⁹ Atlee's reminder helped end meaningful negotiation between Truman and MacArthur. Expansion outside Korea was impossible, and so was final victory through strategic offensive. Chinese intervention created uncertainty. The conflict in Korea stagnated, as UN advances followed Chinese ones. MacArthur and Truman's relationship, damaged by both MacArthur's deliberately understated reports in October and strident responses to a newly limited political aim in December, devolved to antagonism that led to MacArthur's relief in April 1951. Chinese intervention shifted the aim from final victory and reunification toward a limited aim that guided the rest of the war.

¹²⁵ Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 275.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 279.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 367.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 252.

¹²⁹ US Government, *Communique of President Harry Truman and Prime Minister Clement Attlee Joint Statement, Department of State*, December 8, 1950, Truman Library, Independence, MO, 6, accessed February 18, 2016, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ci-1-7.pdf#zoom=100.

The strategy that emerged from this discourse shifted three times: from a limited political end to final victory back to a limited political end. Truman's initial aim used words like "stabilize," which showed a strategy in line with NSC 68 where military force enabled other instruments.¹³⁰ MacArthur, however, used military expediency to convince Truman to commit US troops. By September 1950, victorious US troops rushed towards the Yalu and changed Truman's aim. Political stability and victory at Incheon allowed Truman the opportunity to roll communism back. This revised the strategic end and expanded the political aim. However, the Chinese intervention created political uncertainty, and a rapid contraction of strategic ends. MacArthur dealt with the uncertainty by continuing an approach that worked previously, and advocated for increased resources and territory. MacArthur's emphasis on decisive victory to shape US policy in the Far East caused his approach to diverge from Truman's cautious approach. The uncertainty that followed Chinese intervention was too much, and MacArthur's aggression in the face of defeat caused a reactive shrinking of strategic ends.

The strategy that emerged from negotiation resolved differences between interpretations of a limited objective. MacArthur directed military action against the KPA, then the Chinese Volunteer People's Army after Chinese intervention. His approach required enough means to achieve final victory – up to seven divisions. However, this created tension with Truman's aim, which did not require final victory. It did, however, require some victory to avoid being pushed off the peninsula, which caused a gradual increase in means until the situation developed in a manner favorable to US policy. The negotiation between MacArthur and Truman required two drastic shifts to settle on a strategy that created a politically favorable environment.

¹³⁰ Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 221.

Section IV. Vietnam, January 1967 to March 1968

The US's involvement in Vietnam had long-lasting effects on the American psyche and the US military. US involvement was an attempt to pursue a limited political aim, but gradually evolved into a large-scale US commitment. The strategy that defined operations in Vietnam between 1967 and March, 1968 emerged from discourse between the operational artist, General William C. Westmoreland, and the policy maker, President Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ).

LBJ's Vietnam policy was an evolution of policies dating to the Truman administration. The containment policy that governed the Korean War required opposition to Communism. A Communist insurgency in South Vietnam, therefore, required intervention to prevent its expansion. The United States initially opposed Communism with support for French military efforts to defeat Viet Minh insurgents. Eisenhower picked up where the French left off after the 1954 Paris accords, after the French defeat and withdrawal by funding and advising the new South Vietnamese Army (SVN), making it strong enough to defeat Communist invasion.¹³¹ This strengthened the military character of US Vietnam policy, and established a continuity that influenced LBJ's policy.¹³² The Kennedy administration continued military support for South Vietnam similar to Eisenhower's, but focused on counterinsurgency operations against an emergent Viet Cong (VC).¹³³ Despite the novel approach, the Kennedy aim remained the same as Truman's and Eisenhower's: contain Communism in North Vietnam with a democratic South Vietnam. Kennedy's policy underpinned the US advisory effort that LBJ inherited after his abrupt ascendancy to President in 1963.¹³⁴ LBJ's policy and strategic ends in Vietnam maintained this continuity that extended from Truman to Kennedy.

¹³¹ H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, The Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led To Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 34.

¹³² Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation*, 17.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

However, LBJ chose to move in a new direction domestically, which influenced his Vietnam policy. The 1964 presidential election exposed LBJ's political preferences to Republican opposition. LBJ's election platform, called the Great Society, reflected his domestic political preference.¹³⁵ It was a broad set of social reforms to eliminate poverty and injustice. While generally popular, the civil rights proposals made it vulnerable to opposition from Republicans and Southern Democrats. To oppose LBJ, the Republicans nominated Barry Goldwater who adopted a "hawkish" foreign policy platform to appeal to conservatives who opposed LBJ's social reforms.¹³⁶ LBJ felt he could manage the opposition and create support for his domestic policy through an aggressive approach on Communism in Vietnam. However, the impending collapse of the South Vietnamese government put the Kennedy-derived policy in peril. LBJ sent more aid and advisers, and used the August 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident to push through a public resolution that authorized him to take action in Vietnam. This action in Vietnam helped him defeat Goldwater in November 1964.¹³⁷

However, despite victory in the 1964 election, LBJ's expansion in Vietnam did nothing to improve political conditions there. The US expansion in late 1964 and early 1965 focused on building an effective Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). This strategy used a limited US footprint of 23,000 advisors embedded with ARVN units to counter North Vietnamese aggression and stabilize the Saigon government.¹³⁸ However, this limited approach, combined with a bombing campaign in North Vietnam and Laos, proved ineffective. Political instability in South Vietnam made the ARVN a source of political power, with internal factions emblematic of

¹³⁵ Lamborn, "Theory and the Politics in World Politics," 191.

¹³⁶ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 738.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 738.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 737.

fractured South Vietnamese politics, rather than a cohesive fighting force.¹³⁹ This limited their effectiveness and gave the North Vietnamese the battlefield initiative, causing US leadership to recognize the need to further bolster the ARVN.¹⁴⁰

LBJ used US combat power to fill the strategic gap created by an ineffective ARVN. This increased the means available in Vietnam. Beginning with small commitments of US troops to secure airfields in March, 1965, LBJ gradually increased the means available to “gain and hold the initiative.”¹⁴¹ By July 1965, LBJ approved a recommended commitment of 175,000 US troops. This buildup took place over the next 18 months and expanded as additional requirements emerged. This commitment shifted the strategic burden from the South Vietnamese government to the United States. Increased US involvement had domestic political risk, as protests over US involvement in Vietnam increased, but the risk of a loss to the North Vietnamese was greater.¹⁴² Despite the shift from advising to offensive action, LBJ, with the support of a few powerful legislators, managed political risk by maintaining publically that this was not a policy shift.¹⁴³ However, by late 1966 LBJ’s strategy had in fact shifted and evolved beyond an advisory strategy.

General Westmoreland, the Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) welcomed this evolution. After overseeing the expansion of the war for three years, he agreed that more expansion was necessary. He expanded MACV throughout 1966, more than

¹³⁹ Clarke, *Advice and Support: The Final Years*, 20.

¹⁴⁰ Office of The Secretary of Defense, “Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force,” *Pentagon Papers, Part IV –C-6-A* (1971), 31, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers/>.

¹⁴¹ Barrett, ed., *Lyndon B. Johnson’s Vietnam Papers*, 221.

¹⁴² McMaster, *Derelection of Duty*, 254.

¹⁴³ Lanborn, “Theory and the Politics in World Politics,” 197.

doubling LBJ's July, 1965 commitment. This large force executed an approach focused on independent offensive action which aligned with LBJ's limited aim.



Figure 3. Combined Campaign Plan Priority Areas, November 1966

Source: McGarrigle, George L., *Combat Operations: Taking the Offensive, October 1966 to October 1967*, United States Army in Vietnam (Washington DC: Center of Military History, 1998), 8.

LBJ's strategic shift put Westmoreland in his comfort zone. World War Two service as Chief of Staff of the 101st Airborne Division, service as the commander of the 187th Regimental Combat Team in Korea, and command of the 101st Airborne Division gave him expertise in the

conventional, maneuver-focused doctrine that shaped the US Army in World War Two and Korea. His combat experience persuaded him of the “decisive nature of American mobility and firepower” which led to an operational approach that used those capabilities to attrite North Vietnamese combat power and create conditions for South Vietnamese victory.¹⁴⁴ This idea shaped his negotiating position with LBJ.

LBJ’s coalition of political advisors supported Westmoreland’s aggressive approach in Vietnam. LBJ relied on a small group of advisers to develop Vietnam policy. Most importantly, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was so involved with Vietnam it became associated with him. His approach to running the Defense Department relied on quantitative analysis to find efficiency gains.¹⁴⁵ This approach appealed to LBJ, who allowed McNamara significant influence over an informal decision-making process that guided Vietnam policy.¹⁴⁶ McNamara feared loss of Vietnam to the Communists and pushed continued escalation throughout 1966. He recommended commitment of 63 US battalions in July and revised that upward to 75 battalions in December.¹⁴⁷

Another strong supporter of LBJ, Senator Robert Fulbright, kept public opposition to Vietnam expansion to a minimum by ensuring political support from LBJ’s opposition. Fulbright, a Southern Democrat, served as the chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where he remained publicly opposed to the war. Privately, however, he provided valuable support to his old friend and Senate colleague LBJ. He sponsored the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin resolution that gave LBJ the authority to expand the Vietnam War, and helped defeat its

¹⁴⁴ Andrew F. Krepenevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 141.

¹⁴⁵ Drea, *McNamara, Clifford, and the Burdens of Vietnam*, 4.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁴⁷ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Pentagon Papers IV-C-6-A*, iii.

repeal in November, 1966. This helped LBJ avoid a messy, politically damaging public debate over the war.¹⁴⁸ Fulbright's private support gave LBJ valuable legislative freedom to pursue an aggressive aim in Vietnam.

In the meantime, Westmoreland executed an aggressive "search and destroy" campaign. These operations used superior American firepower and mobility to degrade People's Army of North Vietnam (PAVN) and Viet Cong capabilities "at a rate at least as high as the enemy's capability to put more men in the field."¹⁴⁹ Early 1967 operations like Junction City and Cedar Falls used Corps-sized American forces to attack large formations of PAVN in rural areas. These operations affected the enemy by killing thousands of PAVN with comparatively small US losses.¹⁵⁰ However, the VC and PAVN continued to fight, which hindered progress towards LBJ's political aim.

This placed the negotiation between LBJ and Westmoreland on a divergent path. Despite mixed results, Westmoreland was not ready to abandon his approach. At a March 20, 1967 conference on Guam, Westmoreland presented a guarded assessment of progress in Vietnam to LBJ. Westmoreland stated "this war could go on indefinitely," and that the US "would do a little better than hold our own [without reinforcements]."¹⁵¹ However, Westmoreland had faith in his

¹⁴⁸ Barrett, ed., *Lyndon B. Johnson's Vietnam Papers*, 375. A November 14, 1966 report from the White House legislative liaison discusses a "dark mood" among voters that shows the influence of Fulbright. In spite of broad political sentiment, the Senate defeated an attempt to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin resolution 92 – 5.

¹⁴⁹ Westmoreland, *A Solider Reports*, 194.

¹⁵⁰ Bernard William Rogers, *Vietnam Studies: Cedar Falls – Junction City, A Turning Point* (Washington DC: Center of Military History, 1989), 75.

¹⁵¹ Barrett, ed., *Lyndon B. Johnson's Vietnam Papers*, 413.

approach and the capabilities of the US military. He dropped a “bombshell” request for 200,000 more troops, and proposed expanding the war into Laos.¹⁵²

LBJ took his time responding. The means Westmoreland required created resistance among policy makers, who failed to see the return on investment. A large buildup to support Westmoreland’s approach showed no progress. LBJ’s advisers viewed Westmoreland’s approach as “barren of tangible results,” and “decisive in preventing defeat.”¹⁵³ The second quote was part of a paper for LBJ that used ambivalent results in Vietnam to argue against additional troops. The ironic phrasing emphasized lack of progress in a war that the paper’s author thought endless. By March, 1967 – only two months after initiation of Junction City – the Joint Chiefs of Staff questioned whether Westmoreland could regain the initiative in Vietnam.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, Westmoreland’s request for means was important: 200,000 extra troops required Congressional action.¹⁵⁵ LBJ’s buildup thus far avoided this complication, which avoided a messy public accounting for the costs of a “hotly disputed” war.¹⁵⁶ Westmoreland’s request, however, forced LBJ and his advisers to face up to the political risk of further escalation. The war’s mixed results influenced their thinking. The skepticism over Westmoreland’s approach created a desire to reexamine the Vietnam strategy.

LBJ’s counteroffer rebutted Westmoreland’s proposal and demonstrated divergence between LBJ and MACV that drove the shift in strategy. First, on May 19, 1967, LBJ authorized

¹⁵² Thies, Walter J., *When Governments Collide: Coercion and Diplomacy in the Vietnam Conflict* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), 170; Barrett, ed., *Lyndon B. Johnson’s Vietnam Papers*, 412.

¹⁵³ Office of The Secretary of Defense, *Pentagon Papers IV –C-6-A*, 152, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers/>; Barrett, ed., *Lyndon B. Johnson’s Vietnam Papers*, 419.

¹⁵⁴ Barrett, ed., *Lyndon B. Johnson’s Vietnam Papers*, 399-400.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 426.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 428.

an increase of 30,000 troops. While this was an increase, it was lower than Westmoreland's March request, showing a new desire to restrict means.¹⁵⁷ LBJ also attached a cap of 525,000 troops, which further restricted Westmoreland. Most importantly, LBJ questioned the contribution of the South Vietnamese, showing an emerging desire to move away from "the heavy lifting," of independent military action to a more limited, politically focused strategy.¹⁵⁸ This response fixed the political and monetary cost of American involvement in terms of military means and sent the bill for the difference to the South Vietnamese. Suddenly, limited means limited the war.

The second part of LBJ's response emphasized the South Vietnamese, and moved away from emphasis on defeat of PAVN toward emphasis on pacification. Westmoreland was a reluctant pacifier.¹⁵⁹ He paid lip service to it, but criticized US units who attempted local pacification efforts.¹⁶⁰ A May 1967 National Security Council memorandum forced Westmoreland to embrace it. It created the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program to oversee pacification. This new strategy suggested that pacification, rather than attrition or destruction, was "central to the ultimate resolution of the war."¹⁶¹ Additionally, the appointment of LBJ's close friend, Robert Komer, as head of CORDS limited Westmoreland's control. Komer united civil and military operations in South Vietnam, changing Westmoreland's bifurcated approach. By August, 1967, the White House publicized CORDS' results, which suggested a "cautious hope" that it satisfied LBJ's aim more than Westmoreland's

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 419.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 152.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 421.

¹⁶⁰ Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* 168.

¹⁶¹ Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 191.

search and destroy approach.¹⁶² However, even the limited success of pacification could not solve LBJ's political problems. August opened on LBJ without Congressional allies. Senator Fulbright, after a late July confrontation with LBJ, withdrew even private support for involvement in Vietnam, saying "Vietnam is ruining our domestic and foreign policy."¹⁶³ Once Fulbright withdrew support, LBJ attempted to gain domestic political support through pacification in Vietnam and proposals for a negotiated settlement.¹⁶⁴ LBJ and Westmoreland continued to diverge as a result.

However, any good news generated by the pacification strategy was short-lived. A January 1968 Communist offensive throughout South Vietnam shocked policy makers and military leaders. Despite initial successes as US and ARVN units responded, it appeared that South Vietnam could not "cope" with the enemy.¹⁶⁵ Westmoreland solved the immediate tactical problem with an emergency request for two additional divisions.¹⁶⁶ However, this request was problematic. LBJ's post-Guam troop cap avoided mobilizing reserves. Westmoreland's requested reinforcements, even winnowed down to two brigades, drew on strategic reserve forces. Any further expansion required a reserve call-up, and limited LBJ's political flexibility.¹⁶⁷ The politically sensitive JCS recommended against reinforcements, but were overruled by the Secretary of Defense, who understood the greater danger of a US loss.¹⁶⁸ In spite of opposition,

¹⁶² McGarrigle, *Taking the Offensive*, 222.

¹⁶³ Barrett, ed., *Lyndon B. Johnson's Vietnam Papers*, 452.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 489.

¹⁶⁵ Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force," *Pentagon Papers, Part IV -C-6-C* (1968), 9, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers/>.

¹⁶⁶ Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 352.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 354.

¹⁶⁸ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Pentagon Papers, IV-C-6-C*, 12.

increased means seemed to work. Westmoreland called Tet “a striking military defeat,” for the PAVN, who agreed.¹⁶⁹ However, it was too late for positive reports from Vietnam.

Tet exacerbated the divergence between LBJ and Westmoreland, and influenced a final strategic shift. In spite of his rosy, post-Tet outlook, Westmoreland, via the JCS, submitted a February 27 request for 200,000 additional troops to address perceived shortfalls in the defense of populated areas.¹⁷⁰ The magnitude of this request crystallized political sentiment against the war and showed just how far apart he and LBJ were. Memos by presidential advisors in February 1968 described the strategy as “more-and-more-and-more into the endless pit,” promising “no early end... nor any success.”¹⁷¹ More significantly, the coalition that LBJ relied on to guide Vietnam policy abandoned him. Secretary McNamara, emotional as he grappled with his legacy as Secretary of Defense, laid out the futility of further expansion for LBJ on February 28, effectively ending his support for the war. Having already lost Fulbright, LBJ was now politically isolated.

The Tet Offensive exposed LBJ’s strategic failure to the public without the moderating influence of a friendly legislature. The ARVN response served as a symbol of the systemic ineffectiveness of the South Vietnamese that extravagant American support could not overcome.¹⁷² A March 10 New York Times article about Westmoreland’s troop request laid bare this ineffectiveness, and was instrumental in turning public sentiment against the war. The resulting widespread public protests sounded the death knell for US involvement in Vietnam. Events outpaced Westmoreland, who continued to push for expansion to allow a now-impossible

¹⁶⁹ Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 332.

¹⁷⁰ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Pentagon Papers*, IV-C-6-C, 21.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 38, 41.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 34.

victory over the PAVN.¹⁷³ LBJ was exposed to widespread public opposition, and sensed an insurmountable problem. In response, he withdrew from the 1968 election in a famous address on March 31. The limited political aim that guided a military-focused US strategy in Vietnam in 1967 and early 1968 was no longer acceptable. The strategy shifted to an acceptable exit.

The discourse between Westmoreland and LBJ demonstrated how the discourse between policy and the operational artist created conditions for the emergence of strategy across multiple changes in domestic and military timeframes and outcomes. Westmoreland's initial response to LBJ's guidance used relatively unlimited means to generate mobility and firepower. However, this was ineffective. A two-pronged approach that capped the US force and invigorated the pacification program shifted the burden to the South Vietnamese, and created a more effective result. The Tet Offensive overwhelmed the limited effectiveness of this strategy, and forced Westmoreland to ask for even more means. However, the political backlash from increased means forced a change back to a limited strategy and ultimately withdrawal. Westmoreland's single-minded negotiation for increased means fell out of step with LBJ's limited aim and domestic focus. This created divergence between the operational artist and policy maker, leading to conflicting visions for the success of American military aims, all of which were eventually resolved with the declaration of policy changes by the policy maker.

¹⁷³ Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 357-358.

Section V. Conclusion

These case studies explored the tension between operational artists and policy makers by examining the negotiation between them over three wars. Each case showed a different example of tension. In the Burma case, this was a product of commitments in other theaters that limited the means available for an ambitious operational approach. Victory and defeat in Korea guided expansion then rapid retraction of a limited aim as the operational artist continued to advocate a war for final victory in spite of a national policy of containment that dictated limited aims with limited means. Divergent aims and understanding of the use of the military between LBJ and Westmoreland, exacerbated by the loss of LBJ's domestic coalition, created a continuing tension between operational artist and policy maker in the Vietnam War.

In each case, negotiation caused a new strategy to emerge. These cases show how discourse between the operational artist and policy maker revolved around means, from landing craft in Burma, to troop levels in Korea and Vietnam. However, in each case, this negotiation also influenced the political aim. Both parties realigned ends and means as they reconciled a limited aim and limited resources through negotiation, causing a new strategy to emerge and resolve the tension between political and military leaders in limited war.

Of note, this study examined both a limited theater in a war for final victory, and two limited wars. This compared negotiation in a war with a decisive ending with wars that had a less decisive ending. The American preference for war indicated that the endings in Korea and Vietnam were dissatisfying. The limited nature of the Burma Theater led to negotiations over means very similar to those of more limited wars, as Mountbatten tried to convince his superiors of the necessity for greater resources to achieve the aim he envisioned. The difference was the larger strategy for the conduct of the war in the defeat of Germany first, followed by the complete defeat of Japan. In Burma, a limited theater in a war for final victory, the broad strategy did not change. While there were refinements as the situation evolved, the strategy outlined for Burma at the 1941 ARCADIA conference stayed constant.

The limited wars in this study showed different results. The Korea and Vietnam cases showed how negotiation influenced strategy in two cases with a more limited aim. In contrast to the Burma case, these two cases demonstrated significant shifts in strategy. As the Korean negotiation progressed, victory and defeat each led to strategic shifts. In Vietnam, gradual divergence between the policy maker and operational artist led to the loss of political support and a subsequent contraction of strategic aims. In wars with limited aims, negotiation caused significant changes in strategies for the execution of the war.

This study traced the evolution of strategy in limited war over a thirty-year period in the 20th Century. While the conflicts described in this study are a significant part of the modern American war narrative, an examination of post-Vietnam conflicts may provide new insights in to strategy in limited war. Campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, along with long-term humanitarian interventions in the Balkans, provide examples of even more limited aims that led to public tension between policy makers and operational artists. This study straddles the Pre- and Post-World War Two epochs. However, examining limited war in a more recent, or broader, time period may show a different conclusion.

This study has demonstrated the impact of a limited aim on strategy. The United States military will continue to fight wars where final victory is not a viable political aim in the international environment established following the post-Second World War settlement. Military aims seeking the comfort of final victory imply that the tension that surrounds limited war will continue. This tension will be resolved as strategy emerges from discourse between civilian and military leaders. The 2009 tension that led to reorganization of the War in Afghanistan is a product of the civil-military discourse that defines limited war.

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